NOON

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

by

KATHLEEN NORRIS

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with love —

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NOON

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Books by Kathleen Norris

NOON
ROSE OF THE WORLD
THE CALLAHANS AND THE MURPHYS
BUTTERFLY
CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE
LUCRETIA LOMBARD
THE BELOVED WOMAN
HARRIET AND THE PIPER
SISTERS
JOSSELYN'S WIFE
UNDERTOW
MARTIE, THE UNCONQUERED
THE HEART OF RACHAEL
THE STORY OF JULIA PAGE
THE TREASURE
SATURDAY'S CHILD
POOR, DEAR MARGARET KIRBY
THE RICH MRS. BURGOYNE
MOTHER

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KATHLEEN NORRIS

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First Edition

TO

TERESA'S CHILDREN

JIM, ROSEMARY, AND KATHLEEN

You were so tiny!—and she towered to Heaven.
How shall you ever measure her, how bind her,
Unless our words some light through her are given,
That, having lost her, you some day shall find her?

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I

FORTY years ago, in what was then California's largest city, a bank clerk upon the modest salary of three thousand dollars a year could enjoy almost all the luxuries of life.

One such bank clerk, at thirty-five, owned a little seven-room brick house, with iron balconies and a deep garden, upon one of San Francisco's seven times seven hills, and could employ two good servants to keep his wife and his five first born children comfortable therein. These children had for their earliest memory the little iron balconies over the garden, and the garden itself, with its paths neatly outlined in white stone bottles, and the fresh salty tang of the sea, which lay

at the bottom of the street, only a few blocks away.

This was a simple day. Remembering the middle 'eighties, one remembers one's elders humming "The Mikado," one remembers bustles, bonnets, tin bathtubs, smoky stoves, and much use for the word "genteel." There was a general conviction that children should be repressed, silent, obedient, and industrious, and so we were perhaps, to the adult eye.

But among ourselves—for I was second in this group of five—a busy sub-life went on. My earliest recollection is of intrigue and plot. We murmured interminably together, we planned, discussed, dissected everything that went on about us. We liked or disliked, usually with violence, every caller, every casual pedlar at the gate, and we had a sort of club-life among ourselves.

I was the oldest girl; there was an older brother, always the object of a painful and intense idolatry, and after me a sister, not two full years younger, and then two smaller brothers. The youngest of these brothers was destined to leave us, in his third handsome sturdy little year, and much later there

were two more children, of whom my mother used to speak lovingly as her "second family."

Lovingly—that was my mother's word. She was a tall, silent woman, who would have been beautiful in her thirties and forties today, but who was then quite content to fade into beaded mantles and close bonnets. She never thought of cold cream or face powder, she never had her magnificent masses of copper-red hair touched by any other hands than her own, in her life. She was quiet, even delicate, wrapped in her children, and in her music.

What she felt for her children was an actually consuming devotion and concern. She built about us a world of love. Sometimes she would get all five of us as close to her knees as possible, or into her arms, and amuse us with the histories of her childhood, in the floods and quicksands of a pioneer cattle ranch, or she would tell us of our irresistible charms in babyhood. She made us feel that of all wonderful achievements the acquiring of a family of small children was the most worth while. We idolized the baby brothers and the sister, in turn; and I may

say that every one of us to this day—so many worlds later!—has so far inherited her feeling as to become ecstatic upon the mere sight of a baby.

My mother was extremely religious, and we were brought up strictly in her faith and my father's: the Roman Catholic Faith. But she was also practical in a way not common to such devotion, or perhaps my father's sane and sunny common-sense worked upon her. From the earliest days I can remember she never permitted angry words in the house, arguing, or altercation. Justice had nothing to do with it; she simply would not allow it, whoever was right or wrong. The gentlest, the most retiring, shy, and the least sociable of women, yet she could be adamant there.

"I want you to do more than like your sister," she would direct me calmly, in the jealous little-girl days when the younger Teresa so easily outstripped me in everything. "I want you to love her. The day is coming when you will feel as jealous for Teresa's happiness as you are now for your own. I would rather feel that my boys and girls would never have an angry moment against

each other, than leave them a million dollars. When you are my age, I want you to be able to say that, for my sake, you children have never been anything but loyal and devoted to each other!"

And she would point out to us the idle disputes in other families.

"If those little girls fight about a doll now," she would predict, "they will be fighting about something just as useless a few years from now—a rug or a piece of land. And when you girls are more than ever united, with your families and your homes, they will be real enemies."

My mother's one luxury was music, and the only entertainments she enjoyed were musical ones. There were no movies then, she never went to plays or vaudeville. But she did go to operas, at the old Tivoli in San Francisco, and to Clarence Eddy's organ recitals, and to hear the famous "Henschels." And between times she entertained her houseful of children with whole evenings of piano music, which we would demand by name, as we looked up from "David Copperfield" or "The Wide, Wide World." She played

Chopin and Mozart, and she loved all her old Convent "arrangements with variations," and above all we loved the various operas, all the old Italian operas, and "Faust" and "Cavalleria Rusticana." We all sang "Pinafore" and "The Mikado" and the "Grande Duchesse" and "Girofle-Girafla" from cover to cover, and all the old Civil War songs, and whole books of old German *lieder:* Schumann, Franz, and Schubert.

Our schooling was erratic, partly because both my father and my mother belonged to the generation that was over-schooled. Both paid for it with years in ruined digestions and blinding headaches; my mother—once again not having our modern point of view upon chronic ailments—never was wholly cured. But my father, perhaps owing to a remarkable constitution, entirely outgrew them.

So they feared schooling for their children, and when I was about eight we left the city behind us, crossed the bay, and moved up into the mountain forests below Tamalpais Mountain, where there was not a school for miles. Here, for exquisite years, we ran wild.

Eventually, there was an ungraded little school, to which my father loaned us; I was by this time twelve, and taking charge of the five or six infants in the lower grades, by right of having taken care of babies all my life. My father used to interrogate us sternly now and then: "You didn't bring a book home? You're not straining your eyes? You aren't worrying about lessons? I shall take you out of school this instant if you are, remember."

Under these terrible threats we flourished, "weedily" as my mother once wrote to a friend. About us was all the magic of great woods, miles of redwoods rising hundreds of feet above our heads. To the north lay the gracious slope of the mountain that was our barometer; ten miles to the west was the ocean shore, where we carried our picnic suppers. The garden was full of flowers, lilacs and roses and verbena and sweet-peas; there were cows and dogs and cats and chickens; the book-shelves were bursting with books; the kitchen was full of cookies and whole wheat loaves; the piano ready to yield us music; and our parents thought we were the nicest, the

smartest, the best-disciplined children in the world.

That was our world. There were no problems, there was nothing beyond. The village was so healthy that there was no doctor living among its five hundred residents, and so prosperous that when my mother had boxes of sandwiches left after a picnic she used to wonder where she could send them. I remember that a family of impoverished Russians finally came to live down "on Boyle's road," and how delighted the good women of the neighbourhood were in finding an object for their compassion at last.

Mill Valley had been a single ranch years before; a silvered old hand-hewn Spanish flour mill still stands upon its little river, and gives it its name. It is a two-pronged canyon running up against the flanks of Mount Tamalpais, heavily and beautifully wooded; one of the exquisite places in the world. In Sicily, in all the beauty spots of the Riviera, I have seen nothing more naturally lovely.

Our two acres of redwoods cost my father $325—as I remember with all the keenness of an anxious child, who was listening un-

noticed to the grown-ups' discussion of ways and means. Could we afford it? The property would cost $325 and the plans for the eight-room house—selected after ecstatic agonies from "Shoppel's Modern Houses," said $1400.

"This," said my thoughtful mother, who was a Southern woman, and absolutely untrained in economics and management, "runs into *money.*"

However, to every one's later satisfaction and pride, we did afford it, and for many happy years Mill Valley was Home. Perhaps there was the germ of certain much later activities of mine in my father's serious talk to us little children about his reason for selecting Mill Valley. Mill Valley was to be "bone-dry" for twenty years, anyway—perhaps for longer. I don't remember that he took any active part in the steps that had made it so, in the very beginning of its existence. Certainly my mother did not; she had a perfect horror of what she called "strong-mindedness" in women; she made us feel—what I think all children felt then—that public issues were a little coarse, and that "nice

people" did not associate themselves with social economics.

"Let those short-haired women rant for suffrage and prohibition if they will," she would say seriously, with no consideration of the right or wrong involved. "I don't want my girls to be strong-minded."

In "Mother," my first little book, written ten years after her death, I tried to capture some of the loving strength and the firm sweetness that was my mother, and that I somewhat succeeded was far more to her credit than mine. For I have only to think of her to have it all come rushing back—the goodness, the self-sacrifice, the gentle hand when we were ill, the slender, graceful figure at the piano, with the drooping copper-coloured masses of hair. Her last message, on the dark November afternoon of her death, comes back to me, with the memory of her solemnly and suddenly-opened eyes: "Take care of my children. Love each other."

Yet it was my father who was the real influence upon our childhood, and upon whom his children have come to look as one of the most extraordinary of men. He was sturdy,

rosy, squarely-built, optimistic and sunny; he was alive in every fibre of mind, heart, and soul. He loved life, and he idolized his own family. One could not ask him the most casual question about a book, but he was all attention; as to moral problems, his brisk solving of them is still in my ears.

When we read "Vanity Fair" or "Pilgrim's Progress" or Macaulay's "England," my father glowed with eager interest. When he took us to see "Jim the Penman" and "Diplomacy" and Mrs. Kendal in "The Ironmaster," he would carefully point out to us wherein the dramatic crises lay, what emphasized them and caused them.

"What are you reading?" he would say, in the quiet of the mountain living room, upon a winter evening, when the fire burned softly, and my mother was rambling through Chopin's Etudes. "Midsummer Night's Dream? Read that out loud."

And he would repeat the words with ecstasy: "What hempen homespun have we blundering here—ah, that's the genius of it!"

We read actual thousands of books, architectural, historical; we read dim old Levers,

and mouldy theological controversies; we read the encyclopedia; my father taught us chess, and we read bright red chess books, with little gold boards depicted on their covers. We had the New York *Sun* daily, if always six days late, and we had *Harper's* and the *Century* and the *Delineator* and the old *Metropolitan*—which was a sort of theatrical catalogue then—and a magazine weekly that has gone out of existence, called the *Illustrated American*. We talked about Birch's and Gibson's and "Chip's" and Abbey's illustrations as glibly as if we had known them all, and about Ada Rehan and Georgia Cayvan and Mansfield. My aunt taught us music, and there was frequently a fiction on foot that my mother was teaching us French.

Every week-day my father made the train and boat trip to San Francisco and back, and on Sunday he took us for a ten- or twelve- or fourteen-mile walk over the mountains. We carried a simple lunch, and we went in directions that rarely promised a lift home. Many a time have our twelve- and fifteen-year-old

hearts and legs staggered appalled at the prospect of the last six or seven miles, after a really exhausting scramble. At these times all the richness of my father's rich nature was at our disposal, and he entertained us. He had been born in Hawaii, had lived in China, Ireland, and New England, his father coming from a Boston family. He was manager of the bank now, and president of the club he loved, the Bohemian Club in San Francisco, and his six children and wife thought him remarkable, and he was absolutely happy. He did not want more money, and he not only told us he did not, but actually declined it, on more than one occasion. He said he was afraid of money.

He set poverty, service, and hard work before us in such glowing terms that we quite gloried in the thought of them. There was a goodness, and earnestness, a fundamental faith in the right, back of everything he said and that could not but influence children. Lincoln was his hero; Washington only a lesser light; and in America he believed with all his heart. He read us the Declaration of

Independence and the Gettysburg Address, and talked to us of the glories of our own nation.

When the two youngest members of the family were perhaps four and six and I sixteen or seventeen I began my story-telling. I never remember telling stories before they persuaded me into the regular custom of a story, illustrated, after our early country dinner. At seven they would settle beside me at the dining-room table, and I would begin to draw pictures and tell stories. The pictures were rarely finished, and had little to do with the tale; perhaps they were merely an instinctive device to keep me from self-consciousness. The children themselves chose the stories, for although none was ever repeated, there were certain popular characters kept alive for years. Gipsies and Indians were supremely successful, there must be a dog in every story, and aunts were supposed to be always cruel, although our own were in several cases hardly older than ourselves, and uniformly indulgent.

This went on for the last year or two of the happy Mill Valley life, five evenings out of

six. Then my mother died suddenly, and was buried on Thanksgiving Eve, and my father followed her on his own birthday and was laid beside her on Christmas Eve. He died a few days before their twenty-first wedding anniversary, remarking, with that quiet content, that almost triumph that seems sometimes given to the dying, that his wife could not keep the day without him.

Thus we were left; the oldest brother twenty, the youngest pair hardly of school age. There was no one to help us, except with affection and advice, and there were last bills that ate great holes in the three thousand dollars that was our entire legacy.

Naturally, we were a stunned little group, in our new black. But it was as if the Sunday talks, the reading of Dickens and Tolstoi had all been a preparation for this. We leaped—there is no other word for it—into the breach. It was almost as if we had expected it. The terrible gap between the protected old life, and the raw harshness of the new, was bridged by our sense of the dramatic.

I do not mean that we did not grieve, that

we do not grieve to this day. I remember bursts of absolute agony, and I remember days and nights of a suffocated sense that all this hideous dream must end, and all of us waken in Mill Valley again with the garden in bloom, and our mother at the piano.

But there was definite philosophy about our readjustment that only ignorance and youth could effect. We were "broke," said the younger brother, expressively, but we were not "poor." It was all going to last awhile, this bewildering restriction of money, and then it was going to stop. My own opinion, often advanced, was that "it" would last about a year. My sister said it would be better in a year, and over at latest, in two.

We took a five-room flat in the city, hanging like a nest above the piers, and we took our first jobs. By the middle of January the oldest brother was earning sixty dollars a month with an electrical firm, I had a position in a hardware establishment at thirty dollars a month, and the younger sister was paid expenses and five dollars in a private kindergarten. Upon these joint incomes, presently augmented microscopically by the

first efforts of the younger brother, we six—and the presence of a delicate little aunt in the group made us almost always seven—lived for about two years.

We cooked, cleaned, laboured, worried, planned, we wept and laughed, we groaned and we sang—but we never despaired. All this was but a passing phase; "we will certainly laugh at this some day," we all said buoyantly, laughing even then.

But they were terrible years. They were years of hundreds of cares and responsibilities heavier than such youth should ever know. There were physical worries when some one fell sick, there were moral problems, and there was always—always—the gnawing discomfort of too little money—not half enough, not quarter enough! Our clothes were always a bitter difficulty; indeed there was no one item of expense that was not. Our amusements of course could cost us nothing; we played endless writing games, word games, we sang, at the old piano, we took long tramps, feasting on distant beaches upon coffee and toast, we developed the evening solitaire into tournaments and contests.

In those years I was a bookkeeper, a saleswoman, a companion, a school teacher, a librarian, I superintended children's parties, read to invalids, sat with practising little girls, catalogued books, and did half a dozen other things by fits and starts. Sometimes illness kept me at home, illness of a child or my aunt. But I went on telling the children stories, and despite all the other makeshifts it became gradually clear that I was to be a writer.

My aunt was the timidest and least practical of nervous little women. She had been reared to play the piano, arrange flowers, and be gracefully helpless. In the catastrophe that had befallen us, and under the fearful blow of seeing her beloved brother's daughters "reduced," she succumbed to invalidism. She never quite recovered, although she lived for many years.

Under her plaintive mismanagement, we did everything wrong. There was no system to us; we bought the wrong things; and wasted time and gas cooking them badly. We wore long skirts that dragged on the ground, and that had to be re-bound with

"brush braid" every two weeks, and we were frequently under-nourished through sheer stupidity—or perhaps it was only ignorance. I remember my first reasonably short skirt, in 1903 or 1904. It showed no more than my ankles, but it horrified my aunt. We called the skirts "rainy-daisies" then, and supposedly wore them only in wet weather. And how we used to search the skies for a cloud!

Of the brother who was the head of our wind-buffeted and staggering craft through those long weeks and months and years, I cannot speak here. Enough to say that he was born strangely wise and strong and philosophical, and that he never failed us; that there was never anything but confidence and laughter where he was. But of the sister who came next to me I cannot but speak, if I am to speak of these old times at all.

She was singularly lovely to look upon, and it was partly because one saw in her blue eyes and ineffably serene forehead the shining of her soul. She had been a brilliant little girl, reading at four, and remembering and assimilating what she read, taking school examinations and college examinations "for

fun." But my mother had always watched her anxiously, for there was a strain of seriousness in her almost amounting to melancholia. She had lisped, as a child, on "d" as well as "s," which made her little old-fashioned observations all the more startling. She had been the sort of little girl who copies books of poetry, wears a ribbon bound through long straight dark masses of hair, and selects a motto. Teresa's motto, at eight, had been "Duty is happiness," which she of course made "thooty ith happineth," but presently she found "Truth for authority, not authority for truth," and she liked that better.

As we swept porches and made beds and set tables in the fashion of little girls of the early 'nineties, she recited poems, in a steady chant, and in that way we memorized hundreds. I don't know now where she found them, or by what unerring instinct she selected them, but they were always good. A deep strange gravity seemed to rest over her childhood, and she used to tell me that we were "too happy."

When the real sorrow came and we were fatherless and motherless, it brought an im-

mediate change to my sister. She became, what she always was afterward, the most practical and yet the most spiritual influence upon all our lives. She had no fears, she saw beauty in poverty as my father had seen it, and she made it rich. In the eight years between my father's death and the breaking up of our home in a burst of marriages, I never heard my sister complain.

Standing over the dishpan, in what we always triumphantly called the "Quaker Kitchen"—for we made a verb of it, and were never content to leave it at night until we had "quakered" the kitchen—standing over the dishpan, when the last glass was shining, and the last spoon dried, we would go on with our discussion of history, or social service, of poetry or literature, for a whole superfluous half hour. We had a thousand jokes, a thousand phrases, a thousand secrets.

I never found her—and as my office in San Francisco was further downtown than hers, I usually went twice a day to find her—when she was not happy, ready to plan, ready to make endless little pencilled lists, ready to put the best share of our forty-cent luncheons

on my plate. We spent, together, forty cents for luncheon. Sometimes, when I had my choice, we went to the old Market in California Street, where we had soup and chowder and shrimp and other filling things; sometimes she led me to the more refined atmosphere of the Woman's Exchange, which was expensive. Sometimes, in dark hours, we went to Hellwig's bakery.

Teresa used to extract all sorts of theories "from the backs of magazines," as we jeeringly told her, and work them out on us. She introduced, indeed, the first of the dietary and budget and systematic expenditure ideas that we had ever known, and from that instant matters began to improve. She was employed in a beautiful little book-and-gift shop at this time, and she adopted the dress she afterward always wore, a heavy corduroy velvet with picturesque collars and cuffs, and the crown of dark braids. Here she could revel in books, she was permitted to bring them home, and sometimes we had twenty at home at once.

It was Teresa who decreed that the house —our limited little house—should have a

monthly "birthday," and that we should all make it presents; presents of vases, or a towel, or a dish-mop, or a handful of primroses. It was Teresa who rambled over the spring hills and brought home the weeds that looked like flowers when she arranged them. At the ages—eighteen, twenty, twenty-two—when most girls think of nothing but themselves, she thought of everything and everybody else. To have us all about the table, with our demented finances comparatively adjusted, and our day's work done, was enough for her. "Aren't we happy?" she would ask. She never passed one of us in a hallway without saying something like: "You're wonderful, I think. You don't know how I love you!" and frequently when she and I met downtown upon a Saturday afternoon, with some household or social labour afoot, her eyes would be filled with tears of joy. A hundred times, when she brought me the *Atlantic,* she would say, "I'll see your name there, some day."

For despite all the disillusionments, the deprivations and struggles, the fatigues and discouragements, the humiliations and failures, she always believed in us.

Presently the earthquake came. By a singular chance we had moved from the city into the shabby old Mill Valley house an hour away, and whatever the catastrophe meant to others, to us it was an unmitigated delight. Our chimney was down to be sure, and for weeks a certain distaste for walls and doors made us all sleep on the porches or in the garden. We had—with every one else—to cook in the garden too, where we built a brick oven. But we had water—and it was spring. It was excitement, change, break in the routine, and all our friends, as the youngest sister pleasedly remarked, were "as poor as we were" for the time being. Many of these friends came to us or to our neighbourhood, for the first demoralized weeks, and of these five chanced to possess, like myself, literary aspirations.

The earthquake occurred at 5:15 on the morning of April 18, 1906. On the afternoon of the 19th, we six mailed our earthquake stories to Eastern magazines. We realized that here was our golden opportunity, and we lost no time.

It was hard for me that my story, after

seven long weeks, should be the only one that was unaccepted. Every one else was complacent. *Harper's Weekly* took one story. *Everybody's* another, the *American* a third. But mine came home.

But while my earthquake story had been going East and coming back again, buoyed by that hopeful feeling one always has when a story is under consideration, I wrote another, and called it "What Happened to Alanna." Teresa liked this so much she had it copied at her book store, and we sent it East, and it came home, too, and I threw it in a drawer, and that was the end of that. The single bright spot upon my literary career so far had been my restless escape to the State University, in a burst of more than ordinary ambition and misery, and the two months' story-writing course I had taken there. Professor Chauncey Wetmore Wells had instantly singled out my themes for special encouragement, and Mrs. Wells had given me many a cup of cheering tea, and many a word of kindly counsel. But this interval was brief, for although I could pay my own expenses I could do no more, and after a few

weeks of it I had gone home again, to nurse my aunt in pneumonia.

After the earthquake, in dark despair, I abandoned all hopes of literary career, and went into Red Cross work, and into the settlement work that developed immediately after the big fire, earning first fifty and then sixty dollars a month.

By this time, by slow, by agonizing, by imperceptible degrees, our burden was lifting. We were all better paid, we were all better equipped. We knew the worst was over. Our "children" were a credit to us, and we were all more than ever united. The little brother and I could slip away now and then for glorious evenings of prowling over second-hand book stores, for dinners sometimes totalling ninety cents, for actual gallery seats at the "Tivoli" or the "Princess" for which we had a secret weakness. And when he and I remember these unclouded evenings now, we do not know whether to do so with laughter or tears.

Suddenly, a bolt from the blue made me the humblest, the most grateful and hard-working member of the City Room staff of the

San Francisco *Call*. I had held a society reporter's position for a few emergency weeks with the *Bulletin* a year or two before, and had been discharged. And I had done a little work for the Associated Press and had been kindly assured that my forte was not writing. Long afterward I learned that my famous brother-in-law, Frank Norris, had been discharged from the San Francisco *Wave* for the same reason; Frank, of the "Octopus" and "McTeague," had been assured that he could not write. And that made me feel better. But at the time I felt bitterly discouraged.

So that this opportunity came to me as a Godsend, and looking back I date a happier and more confident frame of mind from the hour I accepted it. I worked gratefully, tirelessly, early and late; I went from one end of the city to the other, searching news, interpreting news, developing news. Life perhaps has no greater thrill than the thrill of the reporter who goes into the office with a big story triumphantly secured upon the scribbled yellow sheets in his pocket, and I often knew that thrill. It was not, in any

real sense, writing, although I think still that a certain amount of such rapid-fire production does lend facility. But it was a step in the right direction. Everyone in that business was first going to New York, second going to write stories or plays.

New York! The name was our watchword. Every discussion began and ended there. I always saw it as it had been in some dark picture of my childhood, with tall buildings pricked to let light through. It was always dark, tall, twinkling with lights, crowded, mysterious. It had something—something, for me. Everything happened—anything might happen—in New York. New York, we all told each other eagerly, was "kind to Californians." Had it not welcomed and made famous scores of us before? Frank Norris, and the Irwins, and Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, and Townsend of "Chimmie Fadden," and Gertude Atherton and Kate Douglas Wiggin?

On the other hand, we all appreciated perfectly that "you could starve to death easily in New York." Loads of young writers did; in the hot summers—you had to sleep on the

roofs in summer, and there was snow in winter. Actual snow. No wonder people died. For some reason one saw oneself dying, in an avalanche of manuscripts, in a locked hall bedroom, in a snowy New York winter. In any case, New York was never a mere city. It was mystery and a mecca, it was a shibboleth and an enchantment.

So the years went by to 1908, and talk of the first marriage stirred our family ranks, and the second. And then upon a bitter winter night, at a skating-rink party where all the season's débutantes were aligned, and where newspaper reporters were busily threading the crowds, a tall dark young man came suddenly into the life I am sketching; known because of his brother's name to all writers, and known specially to me because of mutual friends. And after that everything was different.

The problem Charles Gilman Norris was to put into a book called "Bread," many years later, did not worry us then. We loved each other, it was all arranged in the course of three meetings, and it was all perfected over many a little table d'hôte dinner in the French

and Italian Quarters, where, as we used amusedly to compute, we used four dollars' worth of light on each fifty-cent meal. We would have a little house, and a garden, across the bay, and these would be my domain, and "Himself"—it was thus he was designated—should keep his position upon the railroad magazine *Sunset*. And eventually we would both write books, or plays, or both. So that was that.

But presently somehow the word "New York" crept in, fixing me with the usual sort of trance. He, it appeared, knew it—spoke of it almost casually. If we were to be writers, some day we would have to go there.

"We could," he said, as we exchanged serious looks, "go now." Or he could go now, get a job, and be joined by me. We could live in New York. As simply as that.

"We could—live? How do you mean live there?"

"Rent a flat. Live."

"Yes, but suppose you were taken ill?"

"Suppose I was taken ill here?"

A vision of success—carriages, the blazing

open doors of an opera house, one's name in the paper . . .

And a vision of failure—a landlady wringing one's empty purse, a shawl over one's head, snow fluttering down about one's broken shoes . . .

"Well?" said Himself.

"Well, what do you think?"

"I think we ought to do it. Good gracious, I'll get twenty-five a week!"

Solemnly, across that little luncheon table in the Vienna Bakery, the Vienna Bakery that had risen triumphant above the ruins and ashes of old San Francisco, we joined hands.

We would be married. We would write books. We would live in New York.

II

ON five thousand a year New York is one of the most difficult cities in the world in which to live. And on fifty thousand it is supremely unsatisfactory. But fifteen years ago, it was possible to manage a small establishment there very nicely on twenty-five dollars a week, to live well and to save money.

So approached, New York is everything that ambitious youth has ever dreamed of it, it is utterly, ultimately soul-filling. It is romantic, it is exciting, it is never two seconds the same. Lost a thousand times over in the hurry and bustle of the millions, we used to feel sometimes that we were as free as disembodied spirits; nobody cared what became of us, or what we thought, or said, or did.

We were married on a soft April afternoon, and immediately took possession of an apartment in the East Seventies, near Madison Avenue. Himself was now employed on the

American Magazine, then a brilliant offshoot of the old McClure publications, and with a staff that seemed to me remarkable then, and seems even more extraordinary now. Most of these became our close friends, and in this accidental circumstance at least I will admit that our good fortune was exceptional. There was John S. Phillips, who had been a partner of the old McClure-Phillips company, and whose gracious wife and houseful of dear children made our first Thanksgiving memorable, up in snowy little Goshen; and there was Ray Stannard Baker, then only beginning his famous political articles; there was Ida M. Tarbell, in whose Connecticut farm-house I spent a week the next spring, and who gave me wonderful tomatoes and cherries even while giving me more wonderful inspiration and suggestion; there was Peter Finley Dunne, and John Siddall, who was later the editor of the *American* in its sensationally successful days. And there was Albert Boyden, who gave us our first tea, and gathered together a group of writers that, to our dazzled eyes, looked like a page from "Who's who."

But such teas and visits were the high lights. It was the everyday commonplace problem that made them possible, and that had to be sound beneath them. On our wedding-day we had two weeks' pay saved up, and not one other cent—or the prospect of one other cent—in the world. Part of those fifty dollars had to be put aside for rent, and the rest was ours, to stock our little kitchen, and for carfares, and amusement, and meals.

I suppose that it is only by the merest chance—the hundredth possibility—that two persons, married by that series of incredibly casual occurrences that lead even to the sanest marriage, should be so constituted as to find in poverty, struggle, obscurity, and hard work nothing but "fun." Sometimes a man rather wistfully muses upon the potentialities of simple living, sometimes a woman would be quite content to scrimp and save "if George were not so terribly restless and extravagant." But it is rare to find the taste in both husband and wife.

Whether we were stupid or unfortunate or

contemptible or not, it was our peculiar good fortune to share this quality. We thoroughly enjoyed it. And, absolutely without assistance from any source whatsoever, we lived upon our little income splendidly, saved money, and enjoyed life to the last second.

We paid, in advance, thirty dollars for rent, and we managed our three-burner gas-stove with a metre, and silver quarters. We had no bills. Milk and ice came only when ordered, and were paid for then and there, groceries I bought only twice a week, and such was our horror of debt, our sneaking recollections of that hall bedroom in which New York was always strangling and suffocating ambitious youth, that we had no telephone, and bought newspapers only when we had the money in hand.

Seven dollars and a half came out of every week's twenty-five for rent. Seven more were my allotment for table and household. One went to Himself. It will hence be deduced that even in the hated "four week months" we had a lordly balance of nine dollars and a half every seven days. In the

"five-week months" of course we were embarrassed with our wealth.

The apartment occupied a whole floor in a narrow brownstone house. We had a sunshiny front room on the street, a shady big back room that looked out on gardens, and a connecting neck of bath, a deep clothes closet, and a four-foot-square kitchen. A small woman could touch stove and ice-chest easily with either hand, a large woman could not well be in the kitchen without doing so. The bath, closet, and kitchen were all, as it were, "en suite," and the only connecting link between the two big rooms.

But what a happy world it was! It was delightfully adapted to entertaining, and of course we entertained. Pheasant, turkey, lobsters, we had naturally to forego, but there was nothing in the line of biscuits and pastes and mixed salads and soups that we did not thoroughly master. My Spanish bakery-woman told me secrets regarding omelettes, and my Italian janitress others about macaroni; and we ourselves enjoyed them so much that it never occurred to us that our friends might not. As a matter of fact I still believe

the kindly things our guests said about our table.

More than once I deceived the head of the house in an innocent fashion which I am glad to pass on now to other budget-ridden wives. When he first got home, at the weary end of the day, there was always an appearance of plenty. A tureen of thick soup, muffins, a deep plum pie visible on the table. When he sat down, starving and suspicious with the usual male: "What's coming?" and the usual glance kitchenward, I would say serenely "Chops and stuffed potatoes," or "Scallopped fish," or anything else that came into my head.

He would then fall upon the soup—more soup, and upon the muffins—another muffin, and we would talk. And presently I would read him the letters, a letter from home, or a letter from Teresa, now in Wonderland, or was it only Europe?—with that friend of whom she never spoke without the possessive pronoun "my Ellen." And he would tell me the office news, and take various crumpled memoranda out of his pocket to augment it. When the soup was gone, and the muffins al-

most gone, and a cream-cheese had been unexpectedly discovered and attacked, invariably my dinner companion would ask casually: "Chops, eh? Fish, is it? Can you—could you use those things over again? If I'm to eat any pie——"

He never knew that there was no fish, no chops. Perhaps once or twice he demanded further developments, and I served him reheated macaroni and scrambled eggs without arousing his suspicions, but for the most part he remained apologetic, sorry that I had had the trouble. He had felt ravenous when he came in!

"Cook less!" he used to warn me, after many such Barmecide second courses had been discarded. I would assure him that I was not cooking too much; I didn't mind.

Sometimes, of course, misfortune stalked us, as on that dark Saturday afternoon when we lost twenty dollars in the doll department of Schwartz's toy store. A thousand things were to come out of that twenty dollars, we had beside only enough for our supper at Childs' that evening, and carfare home.

We had checked all our bundles gaily in the drug store on Madison and Twenty-third, and we were now blocks away—for Schwartz was downtown then.

After despairing searching, and what I—perhaps somewhat ungraciously—characterized the "idiocy" of reporting our loss at the Schwartz office, we decided to meet reverses in the right spirit, and to invite ourselves to dine with an old friend in the neighbourhood, who managed a large boarding house, and so could not be taken unawares, and who had often asked us to come in unexpectedly.

But when did such an invitation ever bear good fruit? Our hostess presumptive had gone with her aunt to Old Point Comfort, and there was no hope there. So we went frugally to Childs', and afterward presented ourselves and a pass at the old Academy of Music on Fourteenth Street.

Nothing prospered to-night, however. Passes were useless on Saturdays, as the man at the office told us, not too quietly. We walked up to the drug store, and got our bundles, and walked home after all, for a

blizzard had begun and the cars were stopped.

And this, we said over a late supper, was low-water mark.

But not so low, after all, for the day after Christmas one of—surely one of the best women in the world sent us our money back; she had found it among the dolls, and we were richer than ever! Because we certainly would have spent it all—or almost all—on presents.

Indeed we always felt rich. And to any one who disbelieves this I will only put the reverse question; if bills are neglected and allowed to run, do they not mysteriously enlarge themselves? Do not the "about a hundred dollars" of the dentist's bill, the "forty or more" at the grocer's, the something to the milkman and the sewing woman and the laundress, the casual extras at the club, *always* take your breath away when you add them up?

"Seven hundred and twelve—whoo!" says the man of the house, when the awful moment of facing the music comes. "Sev——it *can't* be!" exclaims the wife, who has always

thought of their indebtedness as "in the neighbourhood of three hundred."

Bills seem to beget bills, in some baffling fashion, and certainly savings turn into more and more savings. There is all the difference in the world, spiritually and psychologically, in being on top of expenses, or buried under them. It is almost never the running expenses of any household that cause the trouble, it is because there is not that actual margin for the unexpected, and that delightful mental margin to match, that gives the housewife and manager freedom and peace of mind.

Anyway, we were always astonished at our balances. Friends with five times our income were "talking poor," but somehow we could always go to an auction sale and pick up an old chest for six dollars—we could go to Boston by boat, and stay three days—we could have our anniversary dinner at the Lafayette—and we were to dine with the J. C.'s to-morrow—we had free seats for "Parsifal" and all was glory!

I have come since to believe that that "talking poor" is entirely a matter of person-

ality. It is never the rich people, or the poor people, who "talk poor," it is always and inevitably the bad managers. Pride, fear, and ignorance "talk poor." And surely it is one of the fatal inconsistencies of our civilization that we pretend to despise the material and the ostentatious, and yet have no patience with the few persons who say they like to be poor.

Absurd as it is, it is actually impossible to say even this much in defence of poverty without being accused of being—without feeling that perhaps one really is—smug. Even to the most idealistic among us, wealth needs no defence. The ability to buy hats, rugs, and stone houses has always seemed to invest one with influence; the ability on very little material basis to make five rooms a Paradise for a man and three small children has always seemed faintly contemptible.

Not that I would say to any other wife beginning on thirteen hundred a year: "Try not to be rich!" It is quite natural to work toward comforts and then luxuries and then superfluities, and life sometimes makes one rich in spite of oneself. But this much I *can* say: if you can learn to be happy and out

of debt poor, your chances of becoming rich, and of being happy when you are rich, are multiplied by about one hundred.

To go back to my own thirteen hundred a year. We had for our playground the most fascinating city in the world. New York—New York—were ever the Thousand and One Nights in Bagdad so fascinating as our first thousand nights and days in the Biggest City!

What an enchantment there was over them then, even then, even to us who were actually living them.

Sometimes, through the magazine, we had theatre passes and went to bad seats in the back of bad shows—but they were wonderful to us. Sometimes the same thing happened with baseball games. Always there was the Sunday orchestra—not band—concert in the park, where we learned to ask for our favourite music, and always there was the Metropolitan, and the other galleries, and the Zoo, and the Aquarium, and the second-hand bookshops on Twenty-third Street. And always, as that first opulent Eastern spring opened itself before our Western eyes, there were the

delicious tree-shadows in the park, and the avenue dreaming in the enervating close of a hot spring day, and the crocuses in Madison Square, and the shop windows.

We planned everything; laying our united fortunes upon the table between us. As the hot summer came on, and the first thunderstorms—which, by the way, I used to think a spectacular entertainment almost too wonderful to be offered for nothing—we usually managed a French or Italian table d'hôte on Sunday nights; after long afternoons of roaming and sight-seeing, we knew several excellent forty-cent tables d'hôte, and a hundred fifty-cent ones. If we fared more than ordinarily well, we went home on the tipping top of the green omnibuses, and several times we went to Coney Island.

Looking back at all the crowded, delicious hours, at the kindly city that was our playground—the meals under Italian lattices on hot nights, the clamour of the streets, the finds of ten-cent books or five-cent cauliflowers on the East Side, the panorama of living and loving and struggling and serving that was always about us—I think I see now that under

all the surface prettiness and the obvious charm of wealth, there is a reason why rich people should not be as happy as poor. After all, there is nothing we all seek as eagerly as we do *life,* the thing that makes the earthquake and the love-affair, the crucial battle and the birth of a child, and the great opera, all one. We would like to live upon those heights—those thrilling heights where it was ours to lead the charge, to meet convulsed and changing conditions, to hear the applause of our beloved circle—to give life.

They laugh indulgently at me when I say this—even my own lenient circle—but I believe it is true. I believe that in any large city, a young husband and wife who care about the same books and the same persons may have a more thrilling experience upon a small income than the millionaire whose house they pass respectfully upon a Sunday afternoon walk, or the great prima donna whose voice they may not afford to hear. There is a vividness, a realness, a constant surprise and keenness about it that belongs to no other sort of living.

And I note that they all like to remember

such days—the actors and the artists, the writers and the poets who are all reaching prosperity and the forties—or even the fifties —to-day. They love to remember the dingy rooms in Washington Square or East Anythingth Street, and the old hungry prowlings among the boarding houses and tables d'hôte, and the old loitering beside the flaring gas lamps over the street bookstalls, the days before they had exchanged ten thousand golden dreams for half a dozen substantial and tangible realities.

My only problem in those early days was to employ my time. For after the staggering responsibilities of the years since my mother's death, to have only three rooms and two real meals a day to think about was almost to be stunned with freedom.

When my soup-pot was simmering, and my dessert made, and when the bracing autumn came, I began to hammer away upon the first of a long line of typewriters—a disreputable typewriter, rented for one and a half dollars a month, shaken in every joint, trembling and vague on its shifts, totally blank as to lettering—so that one never *did* feel sure of a word

—and given to the weak scattering of minor parts on the table.

But even now it was incredibly hard for me to settle down to real work. I used to write letters home in rhyme, try to rhyme recipes for cake, list all my grocery needs neatly, I even wrote an occasional letter to the newspapers, and felt pleased when they printed it.

Finally, noting that an evening paper, the *Telegram,* was printing a short story—a very short story, some eighteen hundred or two thousand words, in fact—every night, at space rates, and was offering in addition a weekly prize of fifty dollars for the week's best story, I spent some two days upon the selection of a nom-de-plume, hit finally upon "Jane Ireland," and wrote quite feverishly for a day or two, let the matter cool—tore the story to shreds—and allowed another month or two to drift along comfortably without thinking of it again.

In those days I was frightfully shy about my work—a stage, by the way, that simply must be mastered by any woman who wants to find her market. I suffered agonies at the

thought of any one—even my husband—reading anything that I wrote. I never let him even suspect what I was doing; when presently I resumed my desultory labours, and tried once more for the *Telegram's* space rates.

This time I finished two stories, and sent them in. We had been married about a year now, and were beginning to think about the Future. We were beginning to remember that we had come to New York, after all, to take the literary world by storm, and this seemed the time to commence.

The *Telegram,* in a kindly note, took both the stories, and paid twelve dollars for one, and thirteen for the other, besides some cents.

Here was glory! Almost twenty-six dollars for less than a fortnight's work! I remember standing with the letter in my hand, feeling only an awed desire not to be too credulous—not to believe too soon that what I had dreamed for so many years might be true!

Close upon the letter followed an agreeable young man. He climbed my stairs to ask if I were "Jane Ireland." Feeling that he had

come to shatter the dream, take the checks, and return the stories, I still had to admit that I was she.

He had fifty dollars for me. It appeared that I had also won the week's prize. He wanted my picture for the paper.

The next day was Charles's birthday—somehow I managed to keep it from him until then. We had a gala dinner, and I arranged upon the board the two small checks, the larger one, and the first of several thousand atrocious newspaper pictures of me, in a tasteful design.

The effect of so much money, so suddenly displayed, was of course—but why try to describe the indescribable? Why select from days so full of surprises and delights any particular one?

Charles having been brought out of his dazed condition, acted with characteristic definiteness. He had believed in my work since the instant of our meeting, and now all was to be clear sailing. I was to write more stories, of course, and meanwhile he took the old story that I had written during the earthquake summer, "What Happened to Alanna,"

and after a careful reading, announced that it "would sell."

It was copied without the change of a comma. We decided that its previous unsuccess had been due to no particular fault in the story; due rather to bad handling. This time everything was different; the matter was taken entirely out of my hands, and Charles listed what we felt were the twenty-eight—or perhaps it was thirty-eight—most promising magazines, listed them alphabetically, beginning with the *Atlantic*.

Then for weeks and weeks the story travelled. From every one of the twenty-eight, or thirty-eight editors, Alanna returned. The summer declined into autumn, and Teresa came back from her trip, and still nobody wanted the story.

Years later we were to see a much more striking instance of exactly this same familiar thing, which happens over and over again, with slight variations, to almost every writer. For Mrs. Porter's "Pollyanna," even then somewhat battered and travel-worn, presently came to the *American* magazine, and was duly read by us, and declined, and two whole

years later the gallant little story was sent to the *Christian Herald,* where Charles was then employed, and came very close to being declined again! But finally five hundred dollars were paid for it, and it was published serially, and that five hundred—you discouraged writers of tales!—were the first of the hundred of thousands that "Pollyanna" was destined to earn for her author.

For five months Alanna came and went steadily. But by this time we were beginning to be pretty familiar with the working of a magazine office, and if I could not write manuscripts, I could at least read them. We used to read thirty or forty a week, regularly, and these were selected from hundreds, and the careful sifting of them was enlightening. There is a "feeling" about manuscripts, much as there is to silk, or bread-dough, or a baby's hand. One comes to know when all is well, and to instinctively sense trouble ahead when all is not. Good craftsmanship has a watermark of its own, a something solid and unmistakable, and as he read other manuscripts, my literary agent, into which my husband

had so unexpectedly turned, would reiterate calmly that Alanna was a saleable story.

When she came back the twenty-eighth—or perhaps it was the thirty-eighth—time, and the list was ended, he started the story off to the *Atlantic* again.

And this time the *Atlantic* took it! The shock was so great that I begged my husband and my sister not to say anything about it until it had been confirmed, at least by the passage of time.

Time passed. A check—I think for seventy-five dollars—came. And then finally the familiar brownish-yellow magazine arrived with my name upon the cover—even where Teresa had said it would be so many years ago! She and Himself brought the *Atlantic* to the hospital, and the new baby, very wobbly as to spine, was obliged to sit up and share our rejoicing. From that day to this no written word of mine has ever been placed, edited, sold, contracted for, except through my husband's hands. More than that, so keen is his interest and instinct, that nothing is written until it has been discussed and planned with him. None of the drudg-

ery is mine, and I have owed practical, and inspirational, hints so often to him, that I used to say, a few years ago, that in justice his name should appear with mine on the title-page of more than one of my books. But this matter he settled once and for all by beginning to write books of his own,—books indeed so curiously his own that not one of his severest critics—and he has them!—ever suggests that any influence of mine, or of his brother's work, is there.

When the baby was about four months old, I wrote "Mother." Like many a new mother, I had been thinking much of my own—that shadowy and lovely mother who had played for us the opera scores, and refused to let us argue at the table. I remembered a thousand sacrifices, a thousand times a thousand tendernesses, unappreciated then, not even seen then, perhaps, but remembered long years afterward, to make the thought of her wonderful to her children.

It happened that the *Delineator* had offered a prize of a thousand dollars then for a short story—a very short story, of not more than three thousand words, and preferably less.

As this story about my mother began to take shape in my mind, in the pleasantly possessing way that a story has at this point in its development, I began also to dream of that prize. I had established a small kitchen table, covered with green felt, a rented typewriter, and much yellow paper, in an angle of the sitting room—we had graduated to an old-fashioned six-room flat with a sitting room—back of the piano, and here, when the marketing was done and the baby asleep, I worked on my story.

It was at first to be a semi-humorous story, called "Mary's Young Man," but as I worked the marvel and mystery and miracle of a good mother began to seem to me for the first time what it truly is, the most beautiful thing in the world, and I wrote the story as seriously and as well as I could.

But immediately there was a difficulty. It was enough to compress any true picture of motherhood, however humble and tiny, into seven or eight thousand words; in three it simply could not be done—at least not by me. So I tossed "Mother" aside—even then it was not called "Mother," for I was struggling to

express in print the name we used to call my mother: "mother," but without the final consonant. "Moth," of course suggests nothing but a parasite, and "mothe" and "muthe" are capable of half a dozen mispronunciations, so finally we had to use the whole word.

I put "Mother" aside, and wrote another story, and we waited—we three and a half, for my smallest brother was with us, in breathless anticipation for the decisions. They were announced late on a dark February afternoon, and my name was not among them. Zona Gale had won the first prize.

The bitterness of the disappointment is with me even now, when I remember it. It seemed to me that my entire career was over, dead before it began. When the news was briefly conveyed, I merely shrugged; but I remember carrying the baby into his crib later, and seeing my tears upon his bewildered little face. I immediately assumed a "please-let-us-not-talk-about-it" attitude, and for days made no allusion to it, nor could I touch the abandoned story.

But finally, with a sick and discouraged heart, I went back to "Mother," and perhaps

actually put more force into the story for the troubled conviction that the raising of babies was infinitely more important than the winning of fiction prizes, after all, and with the first uneasy suspicions that the world was all turned topsy-turvy on the point!

"Mother," finished, impressed the family surprisingly, and Charles said seriously, "This will be worth ten times that prize money yet!" The *American Magazine* published it, and meanwhile my enthusiastic manager had shown it to a publisher. The publisher saw no book possibilities in it, but a second publisher, to whom the kindly Mr. Phillips—again our God in the machine—sent us, was more hopeful, and the final decision was that if I could expand the eight-thousand-word story into a novelette of twenty-five or thirty thousand words, by September 1st, it would be brought out in book form before the holidays.

What this opening vista meant to me—what the thought of my own words in my own book meant—there is no language to express. I walked on air. My little book—among all the other bigger ones in bookstore windows—

and Christmas shoppers buying it! It seemed to me—indeed it was truly—a happiness, a miracle that turned all the world rose-colour!

However, there were presently difficulties. There was that hateful clause, "by September 1st." This was early July, and we were established in a boarding house on Long Island. Teresa was in the juvenile department of Putnam's bookshop, and came to us only for an occasional week-end, and although I had the best baby and the kindest landlady in the world, I could not seem to find a free instant in the daytime. Mrs. Jones had servant trouble, how much less could I manage to get somebody to sit with the baby, or to do his essential laundry-work?

While he napped, I was busy with his wardrobe, and when he awakened I had him down on the shore, or under the trees. It was a burning summer; I think July was the hottest in the usual twenty-eight years.

"Mother" was therefore written, or rather expanded, in the evenings, and in the common sitting room. I could not have the light upstairs, for fear of waking the baby, who was at the age when the one unthinkable calamity

is the waking of the baby. I could not have the typewriter downstairs because of the noise.

But there were plenty of other noises. There was usually a game of poker or pinochle going on at the other end of my table; there were a Victrola and a mechanical piano in the room, there was often singing, sometimes dancing, and always much kindly laughter and chatter. Sometimes a friendly woman would come to look over my shoulder, read a few pages, say amusedly: "Well, did you ever! I wouldn't do it for a farm!" One woman, a brilliant restless creature trying a third matrimonial experiment, advised me good-naturedly to put into the story "something every mother will be scared to death her daughter will get hold of! Nothing in that sob stuff," she assured me. "Make it spicy!"

The manuscript was ready in the last weeks of August, and then Charles read it through. He came to me an hour or two later with the pages still in his hand, and tears in his eyes.

"It's great," he said simply, "it'll—make you famous!"

And as far as one book could, that was what "Mother" did.

So there ended, in a sense, the First Lesson. The long nine years since my mother's death had seemed a winding and a hidden trail, I had felt myself always under sealed orders, or under no orders at all. Yet like many another derelict and undeserving craft I had somehow made port.

III

"MOTHER," thus written upon the end of a boarding-house table, in the hot evenings of summer-time, was duly finished before the first of September, and sent to the Macmillan Company. That it would really be made into a book, and sold, and advertised, and reviewed, I could not believe even then. Only the other men and women, who have been hungering for years of this experience, and who have realized it at last, can appreciate how unreal and dreamlike it seems when it comes.

From the ready phrase "I believe I could write!" to the awkward and unformed commencement, and from that stage to the next, "They are reading my manuscript. They think they may make a book of it," and from that to the last, which sounds untrue as one hears oneself saying it, "My book will be published next month!" is a long road. It is al-

most always a matter of years, although there is no good reason why it should be so.

One stops at bookshop windows. Other books. Multitudes of red and brown and green books. Will that one more really be there some day? And how will one ever tear oneself away from the window, even for meals and sleep, if it is?

I dedicated "Mother" to my own father and mother, with a little verse:

As years ago we carried to your knees
The tales and treasures of our nursery days,
Knowing no deed too trivial for your praise
Nor any gift so small it might not please.
So still we bring, with older smiles and tears
What gifts we may, to claim the old dear right,
Your faith, beyond the darkness and the night,
Your love, still close and watching through the years.

The book was published in the late fall; a nice little slim dark olive-green book, incredible, miraculous, yet actual and tangible in my hands. There are surely few moments in life quite as wonderful as this one, when one sees the familiar words in print—irrevo-

cable, and so strangely a part of oneself, when one may say over and over again in the secret deeps of one's soul: "My first book!"

Immediately after the book's appearance the kindly letters began to come in, hundreds and then thousands of letters. One was from Theodore Roosevelt, who was a firm friend to the little book and to me for the rest of his life, and who often referred to "Mother" in his articles. Other big friends gathered about the little story, and all the critics were kind. I had letters from all the English-speaking countries, letters from men and women who had had good mothers, and who found a kinship between them and mine.

One of the letters I keep was from a lumberman of sixty in Canada, who addressed me inadvertently as "ma'am" here and there in the letter, and supposed me to be extremely aged, and to have actually known his mother, in a Kentucky town. I had one letter from a prison, from an anonymous admirer who said that if his mother had been that type he would not have been a "lifer." And more than one youthful mother, in Colorado or Dakota or Vermont or Florida, sent me word that my

book had made her feel a little differently about the new baby, and that they were going to have another.

So my mother's own wonderful love was sent on and on in an ever widening circle. It was these letters that impressed me more than any small success I had won, or any money that came to me through the book. I had been the quite unconscious medium for a thing far bigger and finer than anything I had ever been myself, and this revelation of the sacrifice and the self-abnegation of motherhood, of mother love and filial love, was a sobering thing to me.

It began to seem to me then what it more than ever appears now: the one great wealth of our nation, or any nation. Greater than the mines and the railroads and the markets and the law, are these little girls and boys trotting off to school in the morning sunshine, in a hundred thousand American villages. And that our girls shall be trained for motherhood, and our laws made to protect it, and that every man and woman in the Union shall be made to realize what a mother does, what she suffers and renounces and sacrifices, how

vital and how far beyond price her service is, seems to me the actual basis of civilization. She is the nurse, the teacher, the judge, and the priest of little America, and what she makes of little America to-day, big America will be to-morrow. She battles on, ignored and untrained, with half the laws and all the childless against her; and if she grows discouraged sometimes, and decides for the apartment hotel and the Mexican spaniel, one can hardly blame her.

To go back to "Mother." One day Charles came home with all the excited satisfaction of one who has managed an intricate bit of unexpected business satisfactorily. It appeared that Mr. Bok, of the *Ladies' Home Journal,* was in New York, on one of his flying trips from Philadelphia, and Mr. Phillips—once again the kindly arbiter of our fortunes!—had called his attention to "Mother." Mr. Bok had not seen the book, but said that he would like to own a copy. Charles, acting upon this hint, went out to get one, meaning to meet him at the train with it. However, to his concern, he found bookstore after bookstore

sold out; there was apparently not a copy of "Mother" on the market. Eventually he had to enter the house of a friend, borrow her copy in her absence; triumphantly boarding the train with it in the very last second, and presenting it to the Philadelphia editor.

Whether Mr. Bok, who had had his own hard way to make years before, was impressed by this zeal, or by the story, or both, I hardly know. But at all events he came back to New York a day or two later, and climbed our stairs, and talked to our baby, and the outcome was that after it had been published in book form, "Mother" appeared serially in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Mr. Bok told me years later that this innovation caused him to be inundated with novels already published, and with requests to use them serially. To me it was just one pleasant miracle the more.

After this I had passed the rubicon of the writer, that very definite danger-line where so many aspiring authors stop forever. I mean when they have had three or four, or six, short stories accepted, without exactly know-

ing how or why, vaguely thinking each plot may be the last, and leaving the whole thing to blind impulse and chance.

By a series of happy accidents I was established; the simultaneous appearance of short stories of mine, immediately after this, in half a dozen magazines at once, gave me the appearance of a sudden success. But I knew better. I knew every hard moment of nine difficult years since my father's death had been a part of the process. There was not one bitter or discouraging hour of it that had not been of use to me since.

And to all the American girls who mean to be writers this is a good place to say: "Don't be afraid to live and to suffer. Don't mind the lost job and the humiliations and the heart-breaking delays. No princess born to the purple, to praise and flattery, was ever a big writer, or a big actress, or a big musician. All this is the acid cutting of the plate, and the deeper the cut, the deeper the print will be. The only way to begin to write is—to begin. No matter how many college courses you take, or how many clever friends revise

and advise as to your work, you will teach yourself in the end.

Plunge in. Let other things go. Just as your brother is tired and shabby and forbidden all amusements during his law-college or medical-college years, you must be, if all those thousands of tiny words are to be marshalled together, and torn up, and marshalled again —or if that bow is to learn its light flexibility —or if that voice is to master its depths and heights. The world is full of women who have one college theme, and one half-finished manuscript, hidden in a sideboard drawer, and who never have been able to find time to get any further.

And these say that success is all "luck." They say that editors will not give new writers a chance. Give them a chance! Why, the average editor only prays for such a chance, himself. He receives ninety-nine manuscripts from unknown writers every day; and at the first sentence his heart sinks, and he begins to shake his head. "Here is the unmistakable beginner!" he thinks. "Her story may be pretty good, but it is twice too long, and it

begins with all that stuff about fairies—too bad! But here is a much inferior story by Lutwiga Stromm, who has been writing mediocre stuff for years, and knows how to shape the thing, and not to ramble on into eight or nine thousand words—take this. And send the better story back to the beginner;—no use to criticize it, and ask her to cut it, they're all sensitive, and they're all proud!"

Don't waste years talking about it, as I did; as nearly every one does, with only an occasional fragment to show for all the talk. But start. Begin. Write.

And secondly, have a manager. You need not necessarily marry him, he may indeed be a mother or a sister very effectually. But have somebody who is not sensitive, who does not suffer all the pangs you must suffer when the long envelopes and the printed slips come back, school yourself to show this person—whoever it may be—your work, harden yourself to accept his suggestions humbly and with an open mind, and be confident that in a year or two all the early difficulties and humiliations will be swept away in his—or her—pride in the family writer.

Sad difficult years were still before me when "Mother" was published. But I like to look back on that happy and hopeful time, when I had my work, my baby, my husband, my sister, when the first delicious financial ease that we had known since our childhood was making life incredibly sweet, and when the big city that I had loved so long seemed inclined—as only that big centre of writing and singing and playing and working can be—to reciprocate.

The next year Teresa married her poet, and we all went down to Port Washington, on the north side of Long Island, where our little cottage—which was afterward to be the Sinclair Lewises' and after that the Fontaine Foxes' little cottage—was just across a square field from Teresa's. I could wander over there with my baby ten times a day, usually to meet her wandering in my direction—after awhile with her own magnificent boy-baby, the "Jim" of many of his father's poems.

We lived the richest and the happiest life in the world. I mean the life of American women in a small American town. We worked—in those happy, happy years—with

Campfire Girls, with the Welfare Society, we made social calls at Sands Point, which lies in aristocratic isolation a few miles away, we made charity calls in the "Hollow," we were on committees, we had a Dodge and a Ford, we met in Butler's grocery and discussed the "Mults case," we met in the train going into town, and sat holding hands as rapturously as we had done years before, when Mother sent us by boat and train into San Francisco, under a brother's escort, to dentist or shoemaker.

On hot afternoons we took the increasing group of children to the shore, on hot Sundays the men put on their flannels, and shouldered the babies, and we went down to the club, to have fried chicken and striped ice cream among fifty friends and neighbours, and swim, and umpire the matches, and promise in asides to be at the Welfare surely tomorrow, and go into the matter of the by-laws once and for all.

If this were but my sister's story instead of mine, how I would love to tell it! It would be a tale then of beauty in small things, of a sunshiny little kitchen full of village girls

learning to cook, and sending her into gales of laughter over their mistakes, of a little sitting room full of wonderful books, of a heart that found equal riches in the Polish laundress's story, the English reviews, and the ups and down of the suffrage movement. It would try to recall a face glowing with light and interest, with love and intelligence, under a rich dark crown of braids.

But here I can only say gratefully that we all said to each other so often then: "Oh, do let's appreciate how wonderful this is! Don't let us ever want anything more!"

When sorrow came to my nursery, and when, after only a few happy hours of being able to say "the children," being able to speak of "my little girls," I found myself the mother of but one child again, we told ourselves that we had been too happy. But presently all the other thousand interests came back, and something like the old happiness returned, and we shared her three lovely children and my one as if we both had been their mothers. By this time every one of my mother's six children was happily married, every one had ba-

bies and snapshots of staggering persons in rompers were being exchanged in almost every mail.

And meanwhile I worked hard. Immediately after "Mother" I began "Saturday's Child," and then came "Julia Page" and "The Heart of Rachel," and a score of short stories. All these brought me letters, hundreds of letters, and much work. But most of this sort of work, however, is pleasure. To be the guest of a club, to receive a letter full of friendliness from some woman you will never see, is to have a never-ending inspiration.

It is hard for me to remember now that I had an "incurable" illness in these years, and was crippled for months, helpless in a wheeled chair, or in bed, and seven separate times in the surgery. It seemed then the end of the road. I felt years older than I do today, and seeing our youngest members happily settled in their last teens, was quite willing to call mine a full life, and turn the rest of the job over to somebody else.

But that passed like a dream; and the war came—like a nightmare. It came to our vil-

lage, and the young fruit-man and the young boat-man, our friends for years, began to look worried. Teresa and I had allied ourselves with the pacifists long before this, but when the men of the families got into olive-drab, what could we do? We tore lint, and wound bandages, and threw ourselves into what she used to call the "love side of it," with all the other mothers and wives. Hate, we knew, would never get any one very far; we used to rejoice that America's share, whether America realized it fully or not, was almost all pride, generosity, loyalty, hope, love.

When that summer came, we took an old mansion outside of Mount Holly, New Jersey, and here we "pooled" the women and children and nurses of the family, at a convenient distance from the camps, and the various headquarters of soldiers. We were three sisters then, and eight children—for a loved little adopted son of mine came with us that year—all the time, and sometimes we had our Major, our Lieutenant and our Commander, and sometimes one or other of my brothers, with his family.

We had our own lake, and our own wooded

acres, and here we hid ourselves, hoping that the war would be over next week, if not this week, following the battle-line with white-headed pins on a big map, fearing, hoping, and praying. To the rest of us, the summer had its human moments of excitement and indeed of actual pleasure; we liked the camps and the cafeterias and the "sings"; we forgot Flanders.

But Teresa did not. There was a grave, a stricken look in her beautiful eyes that summer that was like that of some wounded bewildered creature whose life-blood is going, slow drop by drop. She could not believe it.

I don't mean that she was not merry sometimes, with the children and the gipsy lunches on the shore. She had a deep fund of enjoyment all her own; enjoyment in sunshine and tree shadows and silences, a passionate enjoyment in little children, and their absurdities, and their wisdom. But more than once as July burned into August, and August into September, she said to me dreamily: "I'd like to take this dear fourth baby that is coming somewhere—where there isn't war. Somewhere men can't pretend—for a cause

so small—that they must make murderers of our little safe, good boys."

Only one of a million—her life—only one of ten million young and good and precious lives that were sacrificed in those years. We had been poor almost all of our thirty-five years together. But I had never known poverty—grinding, aching want and need, until then!

In the autumn the wonderful woman her husband called Mother and that she called her "mother in love" wanted Teresa and the children to come to her, to be safe and happy on the big Southern homestead, and indeed we all wanted her to be there, at least until her baby was born, away from the flu epidemic that was reaching the camps even then. So my smaller sister and I arranged to stay in Washington with four children, my two and her two, and to nurse the flu and to be on committees, and Teresa and the others were to visit there for a week, and then go on southward.

The day came when the little sister and Teresa, and their nurses, were to leave me in Mount Holly, I to follow them to Washing-

ton a day or two later. It was only one of a hundred adjustments of our enormous group—a few hours' separation, no more.

Yet it made me strangely uneasy. The day of parting was unnaturally bright and soft and still. I went with all of them to the train in Philadelphia, and saw them through the ticket-gate. Teresa had been feeling tired, and we had just had one of those irregular mid-morning meals she loved. They all went through the gate to the train, the coloured nurse with her white baby, and the big German nurse with her white gown and her streaming peasant ribbons, and the merry little children eager for travel.

Teresa came running back at the last moment, laughing with tears on her cheeks. She came through the gate, she was in my arms.

"Don't miss me!" she said. "Didn't I leave you to try the convent, years ago, and come back to you? Didn't I leave you to go abroad with my Ellen, and come back to you? I'll *always* come back!" And she ran back through the gate—she was gone.

My little sister, this time you will not come back to me. But some day I will go to you.

I never saw her again. By a rearrangement of the crowded wartime trains she went on her way to Georgia the next morning.

She died in January, radiant and wonderful to the end. And with her something died out of life for ever, in the hearts of us who loved her.

And so came middle age, for I have discovered that middle age is not a question of years. It is that moment in life when one realizes that one has exchanged, by a series of subtle shifts and substitutes, the vague and vaporous dreams of youth, for the definite and tangible realization.

It may be a very beautiful and successful realization; it may be indeed real furs for dream furs, real travel for dream travel—but it is never the dream, it never can be the dream. A fact is but one fact after all, a dream may enclose a thousand glowing and iridescent and indeed irreconcilable facts.

For a while, when the war was over, we

wandered, spending six months with my younger sister's family, in Rio de Janeiro, afterward to Europe, finally back to California. Long before this my husband had written his first book, "The Amateur," and then, just before the war, his second, "Salt." "Salt" was much discussed, even in all the hurry and confusion of 1918, and "Brass," written in Rio de Janeiro, but dealing, as they all do, only with America and the Amerians, was a best seller.

We had always said that when we were successful writers we could live where we pleased. We presently found this to be only about fifty miles from the scenes of our very beginnings, after all—fifty miles due south from San Francisco, straight into the sunshine and the sweetness of the Santa Cruz mountains. Here there was a rambling ranch of two hundred acres, here there was a creek and redwoods and fruit and hills and oaks and a lawn, and millions of roses and a tennis court, and half a dozen weather-silvered cabins, as shut away from the world as if they had been in the bottom of the sea. And here we presently built a swimming pool and a chicken

house, and a playhouse and other cabins for all the sisters and brothers and little cousins.

The sisters and brothers and little cousins come for the long vacations. Little cousins come from Washington, cousins come from New York, cousins come from the Mexican border, the nearer cousins come on Friday afternoons, and one meets little blonde girls wandering ecstatically about with interlaced arms, and says gladly, "Ah, the Jimmies have come!"

The little cousins, fifteen all told, are useful when the time comes for the noon meal. They rush about with cream pitchers and pepper-pots, they set the long table with forks and cups and mulberry leaves. Their elders broil and toast, and butter and serve, and chops and beans and macaroni and chickens and everything else with which any cook cares to experiment are cooked in a grove of redwood and madrone trees, over an open grill. Sometimes fifteen and sometimes twenty sit down to it, and sometimes the talk about the table goes on uninterruptedly until it is time for the four o'clock swim.

For the days that are not all holiday, both

Charles and I keep regular hours. We work from nine o'clock to one without any interruptions. No telephone messages are delivered at this time. As for voluntarily using the telephone in the morning, I no more think of it than of using my great-grandmother's spinning-wheel. Not that a telephone need be a real interruption to one's work, but then it almost always is. There are still dear good women in the world who love to telephone one and say amiably, "Tell me something new. What are you doing to-day?" There are a few left, I daresay, who ask, "Do you know who this is?"

At best, the telephone is apt to distract. One leaves it musing about the dinner on Friday night, stops to read a note, sees a heap of waiting mail, an open door letting the flies in or a delivery boy hunting for the side gate, and all is lost. In going to speak to the delivery boy, one meets the cook, who is not quite pleased with the weight of the chickens. If she had known they were to be so small she would have ordered fourteen instead of ten.

Looking dreamily, and with total indif-

ference to their weight, at the chickens, one sees the small girls' nurse, who asks amiably for the flower scissors, she has been trying to fill the vases. And the flower scissors are somewhere—one has seen them somewhere—ah, yes, on the rabbit hutch, and about the hutch, in the pleasant orchard shade, are Kit-fox, and Con, and the beautiful Janey, all so innocently pleased to have company, because they dare not walk up past the woodpile without a grown-up.

At three o'clock in the afternoon one returns to one's workshop. And there are the pages beside the typewriter, pages that have been fluttering untouched since ten o'clock without a word added to them. No, a writer has no business with interruptions, and until she learns to classify them under two simple heads, she can make small headway. The first classification to which "Disturb me" may be added in capitals, would comprise the falling of any or all children into any or all wells, the biting of any or all children by one or more rattlesnakes, and fire. All the others go into the second group, "Do not disturb me."

All my mail—and sometimes there are a hundred letters in a day—is answered in the evening. And except in the happy summer, we work all morning, and until midnight, five nights a week. To the average novel there are more than one hundred thousand words, and many writers think a thousand words a day a good measure, and some think five hundred words a good day's work. There are one or two, Charles himself among the number, who sometimes hammer out three sentences in as many hours' hard work. Fanny Hurst is one of these, wrestling with every one of those powerful phrases as if it were actually iron. And perhaps that is why one can read the same story of hers twice in an evening, and feel the tears starting each time at a certain point; and read it again the next day, and feel the tears come again.

Charles works in a cabin far from the main house, when we are at home, and usually has a remote den in which to hide himself even when we are in a hotel. He does all his struggling and suffering beforehand, and rarely changes a word afterwards. I work with speed when I do work, but I spend half

my working time playing solitaire, when conversations and scenes, in the story I am writing, unroll themselves plainly and clearly, having only to be remembered when I am at the machine. With fifty-two editorials to write every year, at least one serial story, and a dozen short stories, and with usually a little side-issue in the shape of an experiment going on, I have often occasion to be grateful for the old newspaper days, when a certain promptness of delivery was a part of one's training, and when the city editor's dry "Get a job on a monthly," met all the unfortunates who pleaded that their stories were not quite finished.

I always feel that my husband's plots create his characters while my stories are plotted about a character that especially takes my fancy. We both write only of America, but while his analytical studies of social and domestic conditions slowly force his imaginary men and women upon their logical and predestined paths, my heroines occasionally prove superior to circumstances, and arrive triumphantly at the happy ending.

For I believe, of course, in the happy

ending! There are a million guideposts all along the road, leading to a million happy endings. The happy ending is not a question of a gift, after all, for long before Gray leaned weeping upon his mother's tomb in a country churchyard, we all knew, and we always will know, that the greatest singers will never find their public, and the greatest writers die unknown. We know that of all spectacular tragedies, those of the men and women who possess youth and beauty and power and success are the most common, and the happiest and fullest life of all is that of the woman who has discovered the Kingdom within, and who can well afford to ignore the trumpery and unsatisfying Kingdoms without.

Looking out upon the blue bay of Palermo as I write—for sometimes we take the two small typewriters, and a small child or two, and come away from our own country, only to prove how wonderful America is, and how we love her—looking out this sunshiny winter morning from the very room in which ended the life, a year or two ago, of a most unhappy King, it seems to me that there is a happy ending for every one, if he may but find it.

A story about service and love may be a good story, but fiction is but the guinea's stamp, after all. Real service and real love must always be more wonderful. We read the story, thinking, with wet eyes, "That is just like my father. That is my sister—that is my child, alive again!" and only half-realizing perhaps that but for the genuine love that we can remember, all the great books would be so much print and paper only.

Europe has given the world great stories, great music, Europe is filled with great pictures, thousands of sweet sleepy babies in their aureoled mothers' arms. But we have pictures in America finer than any that the Old Masters painted, or that de Balzac and Goethe made immortal in words.

We have the living scene: tree-shaded villages where every baby is started straight and strong, where his eyes and his schooling and his morals and his rights are important; we have women with serene eyes and hearts at peace; we have glimpses—from a passing motor car—of dinner tables set in grassy back-yards, and little cars in open garages, and little libraries at crossroads.

And these are the real stories, after all. And some day when the children are grown up and married; and when the book I am writing now—or the next—proves itself to be the Great American Novel, and when the old Mill Valley days of Miss Alcott's books, and "The Wide, Wide World" and "Strickland's Lives of the Queens," the days in which my sister and I planned and dreamed so many long and happy dreams, are just a little further away, and the time of seeing some beloved faces again just a little nearer, I mean to stop writing the limited books of ink and paper. I mean to disappear into some little American village, where there is a good crop of babies, and begin living the real stories again!

THE END

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